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# THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN THE REVITALIZATION OF A MINORITY LANGUAGE

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of the family for the revitalization of minority languages cannot be over-emphasised, and there has been considerable academic activity and language planning undertaken in this field over the past 30 years. As the number of indigenous and minority languages experiencing decline continues to rise, the issue of minority language reproduction is of increasing concern in culturally and linguistically diverse areas throughout the world. Research evidence in the field of minority language revitalisation demonstrates that the survival or demise of most minority languages crucially depends upon the extent to which the language is *transmitted* from one generation to the next. In Wales, successive Censuses of Population have shown that there is a marked lack of parental transmission of Welsh in families where one parent speaks Welsh and the other does not, with between 40 and 50 per cent of such *mixed language* families failing to reproduce the minority language. It is obvious that such a trend cannot continue if the future use of the Welsh language is to be safeguarded.

Such is the concern about this issue among policy makers in Wales that the Welsh Assembly Government has set «an increase in the percentage of families where Welsh is the principal language of conversation/communication between adults and children at home» as one of its 5 key targets in the National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales (2003).<sup>1</sup>

1. «Iaith Pawb: Everyone's Language» (2003, Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff, <<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/welshlanguage/publications/iaithpawb/?skip=1&lang=en>>).

The Assembly Government has also established a pioneering scheme to encourage families to speak Welsh with their children, namely *Twf*, the *Transmission Within Families* project (Edwards & Newcombe 2003).<sup>2</sup> This scheme offers advice directly to parents and also to certain health care and childcare professionals who are involved with mothers and babies, such as midwives and community nurses.<sup>3</sup> The Welsh Language Board, a statutory body established by the UK Government as part of the Welsh Language Act 1993, also actively promotes the transfer of the minority language within the family.<sup>4</sup>

Within the field of academic research, the concern over diminishing inter-generational language use has been addressed from a number of diverse theoretical perspectives. The most common of these are quantitative sociolinguistic surveys based upon census statistics and other language use surveys, such as the Welsh Language Use Survey carried out in 1995 by Williams and Morris (2000).<sup>5</sup> On a pan-European level, the Euromosaic study carried out in the 1990s<sup>6</sup> provided a comprehensive overview of the vitality of minority European language groups from the point of view of intergenerational language use within the family (Williams 2005). This comprehensive large-scale survey indicated that where language group endogamy was high within the geographical territory, a high degree of language socialization occurred in most cases — for example, Welsh in Wales, Catalan in Catalonia, Aragon and Majorca, and Galician in Galicia. In other areas, the survey found that only around half the families spoke the minority language with offspring, mainly the older generation, and this was the case with Irish, Frisian, Catalan in Valencia and France, and Basque in France. Furthermore, the survey indicated that within the 54 European minority language groups, a high degree of family language reproduction occurred in only 11

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2. See <[http://www.ncll.org.uk/50\\_research/10\\_research\\_projects/Twf\\_evaluation.pdf](http://www.ncll.org.uk/50_research/10_research_projects/Twf_evaluation.pdf)>.

3. See <<http://www.twfcymru.com/English/Pages/home.aspx>>. Similar though smaller schemes exist in other linguistic minority areas in Europe — e.g. Ireland, *Togra Oideachas Ghaeltachta Muintearas Comhluadar*; Sweden *Čoavdda Guovtti Máilbmái*; Basque Country *Ahoz Aho, Belaunez Belaun*.

4. <<http://www.byigwlb.org.uk/English/learning/Pages/ImaNewParentandIwantmyKidstoSpeakWelsh.aspx>>.

5. See a comprehensive discussion of the results in Williams & Morris (2000).

6. An overview report based on the study was published by the Commission in 1996 under the title «Euromosaic: The production and reproduction of the minority language groups in the European Union». It is available from the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities (ISBN 92-827-5512-6).

per cent of cases, while a further 28 per cent were fairly successfully reproducing the minority language within the home (Williams 2005: 194-195).

Considering the precarious state of these European minority language groups, and the general acknowledgment by academics and language planners that the family plays a central role in socializing children to speak the minority language, it is perhaps surprising that the study of *language socialization* within families is fairly limited within the European context. As far as can be ascertained, one of the few studies on European research on minority language use within the family conducted within a specifically language socialization framework is a study carried out in Wales by Morris & Jones in 2005.<sup>7</sup> This study used an ethnographic approach to look at children's language socialization within the family, and addressed issues raised by previous quantitative surveys on the issue of language transmission. While Morris & Jones' study agreed with many of the findings of previous language surveys, it also identified some other pertinent issues, such as power relations within the family, politeness and inclusion, and the effects of gender, which will be discussed more fully below.

## 2. AIMS OF THE WELSH FAMILY LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION STUDY

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The primary aims of the research were two-fold. Firstly, it was an attempt to investigate minority language socialization within the family by reference to Welsh in Wales and, specifically, to identify why some Welsh-speaking parents in Wales *transmitted* the language to their children while others did not. Secondly, the aim was to collect detailed information about the language backgrounds and values of parents; the role of parents and others carers/siblings in a child's language socialization; and the wider social context which shapes family values and practices within the home.

The main research questions posed were:

1. What role do parents play in the language socialization of their child?
2. What role do others play in a child's language socialization?
3. How do wider social factors impact on the language practices of the family?

7. The research was funded by the ESRC RES-000-22-0611 and was carried out by Delyth Morris and Kathryn Jones between 2003-2005.

### 3. METHODS

#### *The families*

Twelve research participant families were selected in three areas —Gwynedd, Carmarthenshire and Denbighshire. These are three administrative counties, located in the north-west of Wales, west Wales, and the north-east of Wales respectively. They were selected because they are areas where Welsh is still a viable community language, but where in-migration of non-Welsh speakers and out-migration of young Welsh speakers is undermining the future of Welsh as a community language (cf. Jones 2010). The education policy in each area also varied significantly, with a Welsh medium and bilingual policy operating in two of the areas (Gwynedd and Carmarthenshire) while the third (Denbighshire) had a weaker Welsh language policy. Four sets of parents were selected within each area, where one parent spoke Welsh and the other did not. These included parents expecting their first child, and parents with infants/toddlers aged up to 2 years, including some with additional older sibling(s) of nursery or primary age.

#### *Data collection*

A broadly ethnographic, *mixed strategy* (Douglas 1976) approach to data collection was adopted as a means of cross-checking and ensuring the validity of quantitative data. Two main semi-structured interviews were carried out and observations were also made within the family setting of the family's language use patterns. As the interview arrangements were made to best suit each family, it meant that in some cases both parents were present, while in others, only one parent was present for one or both of the interviews. In most cases, their child was also present, which provided an opportunity for observing parent-child interaction and language use.

The aim in the first *family routine and background* interview was to gather information about each family's daily and weekly routine as well as other general background information about family members, their occupations, and activities as individuals and as a family. Although information about the language(s) used by family members was elicited if and when appropriate, care was taken, at this stage, to avoid emphasizing any particular interest in *language transmission* so as to avoid, as far as possible, a bias in the parents' reported language use. At the end of the first session, families were asked to keep a diary of the family and youngest child's daily activities for a week, and they were also asked to take photographs of family activities with the

disposable cameras provided for this purpose. A second, *diary-focussed* interview was held at the end of the week to discuss the diaries, photographs and other data.

#### 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide an overview of the key factors influencing the Welsh language socialization of young children in mixed language families.

Table 1 shows that only half of the families interviewed were providing appropriate contexts for the Welsh language socialization of their young children: Damien (24 months), Helen (21 months), Stephen (12 months), Ella (16 months), Ewan (3 months), and Jason (24 months).<sup>8</sup>

Table 1: Welsh language socialization of children within mixed language families						
	Damien	Helen	Stephen	Ella	Ewan	Jason
Home area	Gwynedd	Gwynedd	Denbigh-shire	Denbigh-shire	Carmarthen-shire	Carmarthen-shire
Child's principal carer	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother
Principal language of mother-child interaction	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	English
Principal language of father-child interaction	English	English	English	English	English	Welsh
Principal language of father-mother interaction	English	English	English	English	English	English
Principal language used by maternal grandmother	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	English
Frequency of contact with maternal grandmother	Very often	Very often	Very often	Very often	Very often	Infrequent
Principal language of interaction with older sibling (s)	Bilingual	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Bilingual

8. All the names have been changed.

<b>Principal language used by family &amp; friends</b>	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Bilingual
<b>Principal language of parent who leads on language-related decisions</b>	Equal	Equal	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh	Welsh
<b>Values/confidence of Welsh speaking partner</b>	High	High	High	High	High	Very high
<b>Support for Welsh by English speaking partner</b>	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	High	High
<b>Socio-economic status</b>	Professional	Professional	Craft/Manual	Administrative	Professional	Professional

In contrast, table 2 shows the language practices of four families who provided very limited opportunities for the Welsh language socialization of their children: Justin (22 months), Morris (16 months), Jack (1 month), and Lilly (16 months).

Table 2: Limited Welsh language socialization within the family

	Justin	Morris	Jack	Lilly
<b>Home area</b>	Gwynedd	Denbighshire	Denbighshire	Carmarthenshire
<b>Child's principal carer</b>	Both parents	Mother	Mother	Mother
<b>Principal language of mother-child interaction</b>	English	English	English	English
<b>Principal language of father-child interaction</b>	English	English	English	Bilingual
<b>Principal language of father-mother interaction</b>	English	English	English	English
<b>Principal language used by maternal grandmother</b>	English	English	English	English
<b>Frequency of contact with maternal grandmother</b>	Seldom	Often	Very often	Seldom
<b>Principal language of interaction with older sibling(s)</b>	Bilingual	English	N/A	N/A
<b>Principal language used by family &amp; friends</b>	English	English	English	English
<b>Parent who leads on language-related decisions</b>	English	English	English	English
<b>Values/confidence of Welsh speaking partner</b>	Very low	Very low	Very low	Low

<b>Support for Welsh by English speaking partner</b>	Low	Low	Low	Medium
<b>Socio-economic status</b>	Unskilled manual	Craft/Manual	Unskilled manual	Administrative

As Table 3 shows, in the case of a further two families, we found that it was possible, although not certain, that the language practices of these family members would result in the Welsh language socialization of their young children—in the families of Craig (13 months) and Ruth (12 months), the parents used English extensively, although not exclusively, within family activities:

Table 3: Possible Welsh language socialization within the family

	<b>Craig</b>	<b>Ruth</b>
<b>Home area</b>	Gwynedd	Carmarthenshire
<b>Child's principal carer</b>	Mother	Mother
<b>Principal language of mother-child interaction</b>	Bilingual	English
<b>Principal language of father-child interaction</b>	English	Welsh
<b>Principal language of father-mother interaction</b>	English	English
<b>Principal language used by maternal grandmother</b>	N/A	Welsh
<b>Frequency of contact with maternal grandmother</b>	N/A	Very often
<b>Principal language of maternal grandmother</b>	English	Bilingual
<b>Principal language used by family &amp; friends</b>	Bilingual	Bilingual
<b>Principal language of parent who leads on making language-related decisions</b>	Bilingual	English
<b>Values/confidence of Welsh speaking partner</b>	Medium	Medium
<b>Support for Welsh by English speaking partner</b>	Medium	Medium
<b>Socio-economic status</b>	Unskilled manual	Professional

The study's conclusions regarding the possibility of Welsh language socialization were based upon the interview and diary data, as well as the observations of the children's actual use of Welsh within the family setting. In the case of the very young babies, the conclusions were based upon an analysis of the family practices and patterns of language use.

What role do parents play in the language socialization of their child?



*The time the child spends alone with Welsh-speaking parent*

The data demonstrated that it was the one-to-one interaction with parents which was crucial in the early language socialization of babies and young children up to two years of age. In this sample of 12 families, the mother was the principal carer of all but one of the children (see tables 1-3).

The data shows that the Welsh-speaking parent spoke Welsh when alone with their child or when addressing the child directly in the presence of the non-Welsh speaking parent (with the exception of Justin's father and Morris's mother, who always spoke English). All the children's parents used English together as the language of interaction with each other, and often English was the main language spoken in the home when all the family members were present—for example, at meal times or at weekends. It is highly likely that this practice will impact on the children's language socialization and language practices in their later lives, as data from other research shows—Williams and Morris (2000) noted that it is the language of parents' interaction with each other that tends to shape the future language use patterns of children, more so than the language used between the parent and child.

In the present study, as it was the time spent alone with the Welsh-speaking parent that was the crucial factor, we found that the children were more likely to acquire Welsh during their early language socialization if the mother was the Welsh-speaking parent.

*Parental support for their child's Welsh language socialization*

Most of the parents appear keen for their children to learn Welsh, although not all the parents have the same level of commitment to ensure that they do so. Particularly in those cases where the father is the Welsh speaker, we found that they generally do not spend a lot of time alone with their child, and so look to other factors, such as schooling, to support the child's Welsh language development.

*The status and role of Welsh in their child's present and future life*

Apart from the parents of Justin and Jack, who appear to have given little thought to the role of Welsh in their child's future life, all the parents felt it was important for their child's development and future. The issue of language and Welsh identity was strongest amongst those parents who had themselves been brought up in Welsh-speaking homes. The non-Wales born parents recognised the value of Welsh



as a community language and recognised the social and educational benefits of being bilingual.

*Experiences, knowledge, circumstances and values that shaped parental language choices and language practices with their child(ren)*

Each family's language practices were shaped by the experiences and values of both parents and it was evident from the interview and diary data that parents often repeated their own childhood experiences in their parenting practices (cf. Gathercole 2005). Thus the language background and values of the Welsh-speaking parents were crucial in shaping their own child(ren)'s early language socialization.

*Parents' language backgrounds*

In the case of the families described in Table 1 above (successful Welsh language socialization) it was found all parents who spoke only or mainly Welsh with their children had themselves been brought up in Welsh-speaking households (Damien, Helen, Stephen, Ella, Ewan and Jason).

In the case of the families described in table 2 above, (very limited opportunities for Welsh language socialization) it was found that the mothers of Justin, Morris, Jack and Lily had all been brought up in English-speaking households. Although some were from *mixed language* families themselves, they noted that they never spoke Welsh with their own Welsh-speaking parent. One mother, who was English by birth and had migrated to the area as a young girl, had a strong negative attitude toward the use of the Welsh language.

In the case of the families described in table 3 above, (possible Welsh language socialization) the study found that although Craig and Ruth's mothers could speak Welsh, they had in fact been brought up in English-speaking households and had learned their Welsh in school or in the community.

*Parents' language values*

The language values of both the Welsh and non-Welsh speaking partners were crucial to the language practices they established within the home and how their young children were socialized as Welsh speakers or not. In the case of Helen, Jason, Damien, Ewan, Stephen and Ella, their Welsh-speaking parents all valued Welsh highly, and the non-Welsh-speaking partner was also supportive, or at least tolerant. However,

where the language values of the non-Welsh speaking parent were not as positive as those of the Welsh-speaking partner, there was some tension apparent between the couple regarding, in particular, the extended use of Welsh in the non-Welsh speaking partner's presence—for example, at mealtimes or when the Welsh-speaking grandparents visited. In the case of Justin, Jack, Morris and Lilly whose Welsh language socialization in the home is far more limited, neither parent valued Welsh highly.

#### *'Politeness' and 'inclusion'*

A significant issue with the non-Welsh-speaking parent was how comfortable they felt when Welsh-speakers spoke Welsh in their presence. Helen's father said that he did not mind at all when Welsh was used in his company, but Ella's father, did mind, and this clearly was a cause of some tension, with Ella's mother and her family deferring to him by switching to use English in his company.

But even when the non-Welsh speaker was tolerant of Welsh being spoken in their presence, it was found that there was a tendency for Welsh-speakers to use English in order to include the non-Welsh speaker in the discussion, to be polite, and possibly to conform (albeit unconsciously) to a social norm of etiquette. This tendency to use English out of politeness also extended to parents and other adults' use of English rather than Welsh with the children of the family. Darnell's mother, for example, said that she was embarrassed by her parents' use of Welsh with their grandchildren at the dinner table when her husband was also present. Other grandparents spoke English with their grandchildren in the presence of the non-Welsh speaking parent, even though they always spoke Welsh to them when the non-Welsh-speaking parent was not present.

The tendency to limit use of the minority language out of politeness also occurs in other language contexts. A study in Catalonia, for example, also reported that Catalan-speaking mothers switched to the common language in the presence of the non-Catalan speaking father in order to ensure *domestic peace* (O'Donnell 2001).

#### *The key language decisions that the parents face*

The first key decision parents had to make was which language(s) to use with their newborn baby. The parents of each of the six children who were being socialized in the use of Welsh had made a conscious decision to choose Welsh. Others were more uncertain, and some who had decided to speak English with their baby in defer-

ence to their non-Welsh-speaking partner later regretted that decision. Other parents simply had not even thought about the issue. In this respect, the activities of the Twf<sup>9</sup> project may make a difference, at least through raising awareness of prospective and new parents to the option of speaking Welsh with their child.

#### *Childcare*

Another issue that concerned many parents was the language of childcare. An example which illustrates this point is that of Ella and her parents. At the time of the study, Ella was currently being cared for full-time by her Welsh-speaking mother and, at 16 months had an understanding of Welsh. Before moving to the area, the family had lived in an Anglicised area of Wales, and Ella's older brother was cared for by a non-Welsh speaking childminder while his mother continued to work full-time. Ella's mother expressed her frustration at the early language socialization of her son, but felt that she had no option because of the lack of appropriate childcare in Welsh.

#### *Nursery and primary education*

Even at this early stage in their children's lives, the parents had already made decisions regarding the language of their children's nursery and primary education. Some parents clearly saw Welsh-medium schools as a means of ensuring their child's Welsh language socialization. In the case of the families in the present study who had older children, it was found that it was the mother who was responsible for establishing new friendships (often with the mothers of other similar aged children), and that the mother played a more pro-active role in organising the social events and activities that their children became involved in. It seemed that some of the Welsh-speaking mothers made language-related decisions in the choice of friends and social activities that involve their children, but how conscious these decisions were seemed to vary from one mother to another. They seemed in part to reflect how highly the mother valued Welsh as part of her own identity and her socialization of her child.

#### *Parental power relations and the 'language decision-maker'*

It was also found that in most of the families, one partner usually took the language-related decisions, with the parent making the language-related decisions

9. The *Transmission Within Families* project.

being decided as part of the parents' negotiation of their power relations, roles and responsibilities as a couple and in the household. In the case of the families of Stephen, Ella, Ewan, and Jason who were successfully socializing their child in Welsh, the Welsh-speaking partner was the *language decision-maker*. In those cases where it was not believed that the children would learn Welsh through their family's language practices (Justin, Morris, Jack and Lilly) all the language decision-makers were non-Welsh-speakers. It was particularly striking from the data that the women's more predominant role in taking responsibility for knowing what the child needed and making decisions on behalf of the child gave an inevitable weighting towards their own language values, background and preferences in the early language socialization of the child. It seems that the extent to which the mother's values influenced family practices then depended on the father's values and their power relations as a couple.

Lyon (1996) noted that mothers influenced the language of their children, whereas fathers influenced the language of the home. The data in the present study concurred with the first assertion, although the data did not suggest that the fathers in the study exerted more influence than mothers over the language of the home. It is possible that the study of twelve families is insufficient to identify such a pattern. The present study revealed examples of both mothers and fathers influencing the language of the home: in Jason's family, the father had clearly influenced the language of the home to ensure that Welsh was Jason's main language and his wife was learning the language. On the other hand, in Justin's family, his mother was clearly the parent whose preference for English had created a household which used very little Welsh, and where her Welsh-speaking partner did not speak Welsh with his children.

What role do others play in a child's language socialization?

#### *Grandparents*

Research on childhood language socialization has drawn attention to the role other family members, siblings and family friends and acquaintances play in socializing a child and shaping its language development (e.g. Ochs 1988; Schieffelin 1990). In this study, we found that the grandparents had a particularly significant effect on the language socialization of the child, particularly the maternal grandparents, and especially the maternal grandmother. This was because in two-thirds of the cases, the second carer, after the mother, was the maternal grandmother. Grandparents were also

active participants in the family's practices and clearly contributed in their on-going role as shapers of the parents' language values.

### *Siblings*

For those children with older brothers and sisters, their practices of interaction and activities played a part in the early language socialization of each child, particularly as the child became capable of participating in the older siblings' activities. It was also apparent that parents generally involved the younger child in many of their older child's play, story reading and other activities. Children with older siblings watched TV in the company of their brothers and sisters and consequently watched more programmes that are more appropriate for older children than their own age group. They also tended to become socialized earlier in the use of computers because they watch their older siblings playing computer games and so forth.

### *Extended family and friends*

Other family members were also important, uncles, aunts and cousins, and also family friends. They were frequently mentioned in the interviews and diaries. We found that in the cases where the child was being socialized in Welsh/bilingually, the extended family and friends had frequent contact with the families, and that the language of their interaction was mainly in Welsh. On the other hand, those with a mainly English circle of extended family and friends provided more limited opportunities for their child to acquire Welsh within the family.

### *Interaction with other children outside the home*

All the children in the sample, except one, attended some kind of nursery group. We found that these played an important part in the secondary Welsh language socialization of the child. The activities the children undertook in the groups included singing Welsh songs, hearing Welsh stories, and playing with a wide circle of friends, in both Welsh and English. Some of the children also attended formal day-care, and also attended various social clubs for children. All these provided opportunities for the children to socialize with other children.

How do wider social factors impact on the language practices of the family?

*Density of Welsh speakers and community networks*

It was apparent that the role of the community and community institutions were important to support the language socialization of the child. Gwynedd was the area with the highest percentage and density of Welsh speakers, with 69 per cent of the population speaking Welsh. In Carmarthenshire and Denbighshire Welsh speakers represented 50 per cent and 26 per cent of the population respectively. However, within these large counties there were communities where the percentage of Welsh speakers was much higher. We found that in the three study areas there were opportunities for the families to undertake Welsh-medium pursuits outside the family, should they have wished to do so, although the extent to which they could do so varied according to the language density in the local community.

The density of Welsh speakers in the community affected the language of day-to-day activities like going for a walk or going shopping. Lilly's mother noted that when they went shopping in the local supermarket in Carmarthenshire, English was the main language used; in Gwynedd, however, when Damien's grandparents took him shopping, the main language of communication in the shops was Welsh. In Denbighshire, on the other hand, it was seen that almost all of Ella's activities outside the family were in English.

The number of community social interactions involving the child in a typical week varied considerably, with walks or shopping in the local community being the most popular activity outside the home, followed by social occasions with extended family and/or friends. Other typical activities the children undertook included attending a crèche or similar group, going out to lunch, swimming in the local pool, going to the library for stories, taking older siblings to school, playing in the garden with neighbours' children, or going on a family outing to the seaside or a park. It was seen that even at this young age, social interaction within the community was an important part of children's early socialization and language practices.

*Welsh-medium childcare, nursery, and primary education provision*

The predominance of the Welsh language in the community also impinged on services such as child care. Although most of the families in this study made use of grandparents for their principal childcare needs, there were also instances where the children would have to go into more formal childcare at times, for example when the mother was in paid employment. As regards nursery and primary school educa-

tion, it was seen that most of the parents could opt for Welsh-medium provision if they wished. Those parents who were already socializing their children in Welsh also intended to select Welsh-medium / bilingual nursery provision and primary schools, and even those parents who were not socializing their children in Welsh at home saw the education system as an opportunity for their child to learn Welsh.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the study found that the primary factors affecting a child's Welsh language socialization were the time spent with the Welsh-speaking parent; the degree of involvement of Welsh-speaking grandparents; the language background, language values, and language practices of parents and their extended families; and parental language values and power relations. Additional factors included child-minding and childcare options; the local education policy and schooling options; and the family's involvement with community associations/organisations and social interactions.

Gender was also a salient factor since, for all the children apart from Justin, their mother was their principal carer. The children in the study spent more time with their mothers and engaged in a wider range of activities with their mothers than their fathers. The children with Welsh-speaking mothers consequently had more opportunities for being involved in Welsh-medium activities than those children with Welsh-speaking fathers. Whether each Welsh-speaking parent succeeded in facilitating the Welsh language socialization of their child within the home or not depended on the combination of factors, which potentially facilitated or hindered the early socialization of Welsh in each family's situation. Different factors combined to determine each child's early language Welsh language socialization.

These findings of the study add to our understanding of minority language socialization by demonstrating that a child's minority language socialization is a complex process involving, even at a very young age, practices of interaction with a number of other family members, friends, and neighbours, in addition to the child's parents. It was also apparent that a child's socialization is bound up with his/her family's interaction with their local community and policy-determined provision regarding childcare, nursery and primary education.



The study also confirmed the findings of quantitative surveys such as the Euro-mosaic study, which noted that the family, education and community, along with the institutional and legal frameworks in which languages were used, provided the context for the continuing use of a language and created the conditions for expanding its use. It also confirmed issues such as the importance of parents' language backgrounds noted in previous research (Gathercole *et alii* 2005) and parents' confidence in their own Welsh language ability (Harrison *et alii* 1981; Lyon 1996). However, the study also highlighted other crucially significant factors not previously identified, namely: language values, issues of politeness and inclusion of non-Welsh speakers, and power relations between the mother and father which determined the *key language decision maker* in the household.

The study found that most non-Welsh speaking parents only learned a minimal amount, if any, Welsh, and the parents' main language of interaction together was English. Family and individual language practices were established early, and were very hard to change even when the individuals involved develop a greater understanding and fluency in the minority language. This inevitably meant that English played a more dominant role than Welsh within the overall language practices of mixed-language families, which raises questions about the sustainability of a child's Welsh language skills and use in the longer term.

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